From: Ric Denton
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/26/02 1:19pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement - A consumer view

Dear Judge Kollar-Kotelly:

The following are my own personal views as a regular user of Microsoft application software (Microsoft Outlook, Word, PowerPoint, Excel). The details provided below lead me to make the plea that Microsoft should not be able to use its Operating System Monopoly to freeze out competing application software packages. This means that any settlement needs adequate legal enforcement teeth to ensure the viability of competing application software packages. To accomplish this, there likely needs to be a true "wall" between the Operating System group and the Microsoft applications groups, or even a company breakup to ensure needed competition in applications software.

My view is based on some very simple and obvious considerations. Specifically, I am constantly dismayed at the poor quality of key features in Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Their drawing packages in these applications are definitely not WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get.) This leads to countless wasted hours to do draw and paste, and redraw and repaste, to arrive at acceptable results. The documentation (Help functions) on these packages is also deplorable. If Microsoft chooses to publish such deficient software, that is of course their choice, but it dismays me that viable alternatives are not available. In the real world no application software developer is able to fairly compete with the Microsoft juggernaut, given the operating system monopoly that Microsoft enjoys.

It is my opinion, based on both the above reality and on my following of the news, that Microsoft will continue to exploit its operating system monopoly as it launches into new applications areas.

I gather that these problems fall under the category of "bolting" of operating system/application software. I have also read that there are related issues in Microsoft's use of hidden controls in their middleware. Further, I have read that Microsoft has communication protocols embedded in their operating software or middleware that would freeze out competition. I do not have the expertise to evaluate this, but these are the kind of practices that would give Microsoft an unfair competitive advantage.

Any application software developer would need the same access to operating software, at the same time, as Microsoft-internal developers if there is to be a level playing field. It strikes me that this is the minimum requirement that should be expected.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views as part of your deliberation process.

Sincerely,

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